



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE BAY AREA
An Inter-League Organization of the San Francisco Bay Area



May 27, 2005

To: Joint Policy Committee
Re: Support of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy for Transit Extensions

The League of Women Voters of the Bay Area supports the coordination of transportation with land use and air quality policies. We encouraged MTC to consider these related aspects when they adopted their Transportation 2030 Plan. We support the principle that transportation extensions should not only take land use and air quality into account, but also that policies should be able to influence where new development occurs. Because the land use assumptions for the T2030 Plan accepted an "infill" model, based on the Smart Growth Vision for the Bay Area, it is important that implementing policies work toward making this a reality.

Therefore, we support the draft TOD policy as presented, but have some concerns as to whether it will achieve its intent and would suggest some refinements.

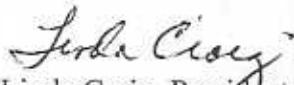
We definitely recognize the difficulty of regional agencies directing what independent local jurisdictions can do with their land use. (The Bay Area League is quite similar - composed of 21 local Leagues; we can establish regional policies, but local Leagues as their own independent corporations, can take our guidance or not within their own territories.) The proposed policy therefore is a reasonable balance between conditioning funding for transit extensions based on policy compliance and the more heavy-handed approach of mandating specific regional land use solutions on local entities.

On the other hand, we are concerned that the consultant's market-tested thresholds are set too low. They are reasonable, and they will need to be confirmed in adopted zoning. Even then, what happens on the ground as specific developments are approved may be lower density than needs to occur. We all know that there is slippage below zoning maximums as part of the hearing and decision process. The League would support minimum densities to assure achievement of the Smart Growth Vision.

Another concerns we have is the need to make the best use of the precious land immediately adjacent to transit stations. These areas need to give priority to transit-dependent uses: affordable housing, destination jobs and convenience services. If the uses in these areas do not relate to the transit priority, the space will not be used as well as it could and should be.

We do believe that MTC will have a number of refinements to the draft policy as a result of all the outreach meetings and hearings. We hope that your comments, our comments and others' will be considered in the final version. We concur with the observations made by your staff.

Finally, as a regional organization, we are encouraging our local Leagues to be informed and participate in the decisions in each of the corridors and station area plans and to support these regional principles at the local level.


Linda Craig, President